

This detence of individuality is learned from nature. In an ecosystem, diversity is strength and so biodiversity becomes a source of basic ethical insight. In its most basic form, it provides a guide to "help us distinguish which of our actions serve the thrust of natural evolution and which of them impede them." [Murray Bookchin, The Ecology of Freedom, p. 342]

So, the ethical concept "lies in the feeling of sociality, inherent in the entire animal world and in the conceptions of equity, which constitutes one of the fundamental primary judgements of human reason." [Ethics, pp. 311-2] Therefore anarchists embrace "the permanent presence of a double tendency - towards greater development on the one side, of sociality, and, on the other side, of a consequent increase of the intensity of life which results in an increase of happiness for the individuals, and in progress - physical, intellectual, and moral." [Op. Cit., pp. 19-20]

Anarchist attitudes to authority, the state, capitalism, private property and so on all come from our ethical belief that the liberty of individuals is of prime concern and that our ability to empathize with others, to see ourselves in others (our basic equality and common individuality, in other words).

Hence anarchism combines the subjective evaluation by individuals of a given set of circumstances and actions with the drawing of objective interpersonal conclusions of these evaluations based upon empathic bounds and discussion between equals. Hence anarchism is based on a humanistic approach to ethical ideas, one that evolves along with society and individual development.

Hence an ethical society is one in which "[d]ifference among people will be respected, indeed fostered, as elements that enrich the unity of experience and phenomenon . . . [the different] will be conceived of as individual parts of a whole all the richer because of its complexity." [Murray Bookchin, Post Scarcity Anarchism, p. 82]



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PRINCIPLES OF



ANARCHISM

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A.2 What does anarchism stand for?

These words by Percy Bysshe Shelley gives an idea of what anarchism stands for in practice and what ideals drive it:

*The man
Of virtuous soul commands not, nor obeys:
Power, like a desolating pestilence,
Pollutes whate'er it touches, and obedience,
Blame of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth,
Makes slaves of men, and, of the human frame,
A mechanised automaton.*

As Shelley's lines suggest, anarchists place a high priority on liberty, desiring it both for themselves and others. They also consider individuality -- that which makes one a unique person -- to be a most important aspect of humanity. They recognise, however, that individuality does not exist in a vacuum but is a social phenomenon. Outside of society, individuality is impossible, since one needs other people in order to develop, expand, and grow.

Moreover, between individual and social development there is a reciprocal effect: individuals grow within and are shaped by a particular society, while at the same time they help shape and change aspects of that society (as well as themselves and other individuals) by their actions and thoughts. A society not based on free individuals, their hopes, dreams and ideas would be hollow and dead. Thus, *"the making of a human being... is a collective process, a process in which both community and the individual participate"* (Muray Bookchin, *The Modern Crises*, p. 79). Consequently, any political theory which bases itself purely on the social or the individual is false.

In order for individuality to develop to the fullest possible extent, anarchists consider it essential to create a society based on three principles: liberty, equality and solidarity, which are interdependent.

Liberty is essential for the full flowering of human intelligence, creativity, and dignity. To be dominated by another is to be denied the chance to think and act for oneself, which is the only way to grow and develop one's individuality. Domination also stifles innovation and personal responsibility, leading to conformity and mediocrity. Thus the society that maximises the growth of individuality will necessarily be based on voluntary association, not coercion and authority. To quote Proudhon, *"All associated and all free."* Or, as Luigi Galleani puts it, anarchism is *"the autonomy of the individual within the freedom of association"* [The End of Anarchism?, p. 35] (See further section A.2.2 - *Why do anarchists emphasise liberty?*).

If liberty is essential for the fullest development of individuality, then equality is essential for genuine liberty to exist. There can be no real freedom in a class-stratified, hierarchical society riddled with gross inequalities of power, wealth, and privilege. For in such a society only a few -- those at the top of the hierarchy -- are relatively free, while the rest are semi-slaves. Hence without equality, liberty becomes a mockery -- at best the "freedom" to choose one's master (boss), as under capitalism. Moreover, even the elite under such conditions are not really free, because they must live in a stunted society made ugly and barren by the tyranny and alienation of the majority. And since individuality develops to the fullest only with the widest contact with other free individuals, members of the elite are restricted in the possibilities for their own development by the scarcity of free individuals with whom to interact. (See also section A.2.5 - *Why are anarchists in favour of equality?*)

Finally, solidarity means mutual aid: working voluntarily and co-operatively with others who share the same goals and interests. But without liberty and equality, society becomes a pyramid of competing classes based on the domination of the lower by the higher strata. In such a society, as we know from our own, it's "dominate or be dominated," "dog eat dog," and "everyone for themselves." Thus "rigged individualism" is promoted at the expense of community feeling, with those on the bottom resenting those above them and those on the top fearing those below them. Under such conditions, there can be no society-wide solidarity, but only a partial form of solidarity within classes whose interests are opposed, which weakens society as a whole. (See also section A.2.6 - *Why is solidarity important to anarchists?*)

"The failure of modern culture lies not in its principle of individualism, not in the idea that mortal virtue is the same as the pursuit of self-interest, but in the deterioration of the meaning of self-interest; not that they are not concerned with their self-interest, but that they are not concerned enough with the interest of their real self: not in the fact that they are too selfish, but that they do not love themselves." [Man for Himself, p. 139]

Therefore, strictly speaking, anarchism is based upon an egoistic frame of reference - ethical ideas must be an expression of what gives us pleasure as a whole individual (both rational and emotional, reason and empathy). This leads all anarchists to reject the false division between egoism and altruism and recognise that what many people (for example, capitalists) call "egoism" results in individual self-negation and a reduction of individual self-interest. As Kropotkin argues:

"What was it that morality, evolving in animal and human societies, was striving for, if not for the opposition to the promptings of narrow egoism, and bringing up humanity in the spirit of the development of altruism? The very expressions 'egoism' and 'altruism' are incorrect, because there can be no pure altruism without an admixture of personal pleasure - and consequently, without egoism. It would therefore be more nearly correct to say that ethics aims at the development of social habits and the weakening of the narrowly personal habits. These last make the individual lose sight of society through his regard for his own person, and therefore they even fail to attain their object, i.e. the welfare of the individual, whereas the development of habits of work in common, and of mutual aid in general, leads to a series of beneficial consequences in the family as well as society." [Ethics, pp. 307-8]

Therefore anarchism is based upon the rejection of moral absolutism (i.e. "God's Law," "Natural Law," "Man's Nature," "A is A") and the narrow egoism which moral relativism so easily lends itself to. Instead, anarchists recognise that there exists concepts of right and wrong which exist outside of an individual's evaluation of their own acts.

This is because of the social nature of humanity. The interactions between individuals does develop into a social maxim which, according to Kropotkin, be summarised as *"Is it useful to society? Then it is good. Is it harmful? Then it is bad."* [Anarchist Morality, Op. Cit., p. 91] What acts human beings think of as right or wrong is not, however, unchanging and the "estimate of what is useful or harmful... changes, but the foundation remains the same." [Op. Cit., p. 92]

This sense of empathy, based upon a critical mind, is the fundamental basis of social ethics - the 'what-should-be' can be seen as an ethical criterion for the truth or validity of an objective 'what-is.' So, while recognising the root of ethics in nature, anarchists consider ethics as fundamentally a human idea - the product of life, thought and evolution created by individuals and generalised by social living and community.

So what, for anarchists, is unethical behaviour? Essentially anything that denies the most precious achievement of history: the liberty, uniqueness and dignity of the individual.

Individuals can see what actions are unethical because, due to empathy, they can place themselves into the position of those suffering the behaviour. Acts which restrict individuality can be considered unethical for two (interrelated) reasons:

Firstly, the protection and development individuality in all enriches the life of every individual and it gives pleasure to individuals because of the diversity it produces. This egoist basis of ethics reinforces the second (social) reason, namely that individuality is good for society for it enriches the community and social life, strengthening it and allowing it to grow and evolve. As Bakunin constantly argued, progress is marked by a movement from *"the simple to the complex"* or, in the words of Herbert Read, it *"is measured by the degree of differentiation within a society. If the individual is a unit in a corporate mass, his [or her] life will be limited, dull, and mechanical. If the individual is a unit on his [or her] own, with space and potentiality for separate action he can develop - develop in the only real meaning of the word - develop in consciousness of strength vitality, and joy."* [The Philosophy of Anarchism, in Anarchy and Order, p. 37]

26 Therefore Anarchists take, essentially, a scientific approach to problems. Anarchists arrive at ethical judgements without relying on the mythology of spiritual aid, but on the merits of their own minds. This is done through logic and reason, and is a far better route to resolving moral questions than obsolete, authoritarian systems like orthodox religion and certainly better than the "there is no wrong or right" of moral relativism.

So, what are the source of ethical concepts? For Kropotkin, "nature has thus to be recognized as the first ethical teacher of man. The social instinct, innate in men as well as in all the social animals, - this is the origin of all ethical conceptions and all subsequent development of morality." [Ethics, p. 45]

Life, in other words, is the basis of anarchist ethics. This means that, essentially (according to anarchists), an individual's ethical viewpoints are derived from three basic sources:

- 1) from the society an individual lives in. As Kropotkin pointed out, "Man's conceptions of morality are completely dependent upon the form that their social life assumed at a given time in a given locality. . . this [social life] is reflected in the moral conceptions of men and in the moral teachings of the given epoch." [Ethics, p. 315] In other words, experience of life and of living.
- 2) A critical evaluation by individuals of their society's ethical norms, as indicated above. This is the core of Erich Fromm's argument that "Man must accept the responsibility for himself and the fact that only using his own powers can he give meaning to his life. . . there is no meaning to life except the meaning man gives his life by the unfolding of his powers, by living productively." [Man for Himself, p. 45] In other words, individual thought and development.
- 3) The feeling of empathy - "the true origin of the moral sentiment. . . [is] simply in the feeling of sympathy." ["Anarchist Morality", Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets, p. 94] In other words, an individual's ability to feel and share experiences and concepts with others.

This last factor is very important for the development of a sense of ethics. As Kropotkin argued, "If the more powerful your imagination, the better you can picture to yourself what any being feels when it is made to suffer, and the more intense and delicate will your moral sense be. . . And the more you are accustomed by circumstances, by those surrounding you, or by the intensity of your own thought and your imagination, to act as your own thought and imagination urge, the more will the moral sentiment grow in you, the more will it become habitual" [Op. Cit., p. 95]

So, anarchism is based (essentially) upon the ethical maxim "treat others as you would like them to treat you under similar circumstances." Anarchists are neither egoists nor altruists when it comes to moral stands, they are simply human.

As Kropotkin noted, "egoism" and "altruism" both have their roots in the same motive - "however great the difference between the two actions in their result of humanity, the motive is the same. It is the quest for pleasure." [Op. Cit., p. 85]

For anarchists, a person's sense of ethics must be developed by themselves and requires the full use of an individual's mental abilities as part of a social grouping, as part of a community. As capitalism and other forms of authority weaken the individual's imagination and reduce the number of outlets for them to exercise their reason under the dead weight of hierarchy as well as disrupting community, little wonder that life under capitalism is marked by a stark disregard for others and lack of ethical behaviour. Capitalist society gets the ethical behaviour it deserves.

In a society which moves between moral relativism and absolutism it is little wonder that egoism becomes confused with egoism. By disempowering individuals from developing their own ethical ideas and instead encouraging blind obedience to external authority (and so moral relativism once individual's think that they are without that authority's power), capitalist society ensures an impoverishment of individuality and ego. As Erich Fromm puts it:

It should be noted that solidarity does not imply self-sacrifice or self-negation. As Errico Malatesta makes clear:

3 "we are all egoists, we all seek our own satisfaction. But the anarchist finds his greatest satisfaction in struggling for the good of all, for the achievement of a society in which he [sic] can be a brother among brothers, and among healthy, intelligent, educated, and happy people. But he who is adaptable, who is satisfied to live among slaves and draw profit from the labour of slaves, is not, and cannot be, an anarchist" [Life and Ideas, p. 23].

For anarchists, real wealth is other people and the planet on which we live.

Also, honouring individuality does not mean that anarchists are idealists, thinking that people or ideas develop outside of society. Individuality and ideas grow and develop within society, in response to material and intellectual interactions and experiences, which people actively analyse and interpret. Anarchism, therefore, is a materialist theory, recognising that ideas develop and grow from social interaction and individuals' mental activity (see Mikhail Bakunin's God and the State for the classic discussion of materialism versus idealism).

This means that an anarchist society will be the creation of human beings, not some deity or other transcendental principle, since "[n]othing ever arranges itself, least of all in human relations. It is men [sic] who do the arranging, and they do it according to their attitudes and understanding of things." [Alexander Berkman, ABC of Anarchism, page 42]

Therefore anarchism bases itself upon the power of ideas and the ability of people to act and transform their lives based on what they consider to be right. In other words, liberty.

A.2.1 What is the essence of anarchism?

As we have seen, "an-archy" implies "without rulers" or "without (hierarchical) authority." Anarchists are not against "authorities" in the sense of experts who are particularly knowledgeable, skillful, or wise, though they believe that such authorities should have no power to force others to follow their recommendations (see section B.1 for more on this distinction). In a nutshell, then, anarchism is anti-authoritarianism.

Anarchists are anti-authoritarians because they believe that no human being should dominate another. Anarchists, in L. Susan Brown's words, "believe in the inherent dignity and worth of the human individual." [The Politics of Individualism, p. 107] Domination is inherently degrading and demeaning, since it submerges the will and judgement of the dominated to the will and judgement of the dominators, thus destroying the dignity and self-respect that comes only from personal autonomy. Moreover, domination makes possible and generally leads to exploitation, which is the root of inequality, poverty, and social breakdown.

In other words, then, the essence of anarchism (to express it positively) is free co-operation between equal to maximise their liberty and individuality.

Co-operation between equals is the key to anti-authoritarianism. By co-operation we can develop and protect our own intrinsic value as unique individuals as well as enriching our lives and liberty for "[n]o individual can recognise his own humanity, and consequently realise it in his lifetime, if not by recognizing it in others and co-operating in its realisation for others." [Michael Bakunin, cited by Malatesta in Anarchy, p. 27]

While being anti-authoritarians, anarchists recognise that human beings have a social nature and that they mutually influence each other. We cannot escape the "authority" of this mutual influence, because, as Bakunin reminds us:

"[I]f the abolition of this mutual influence would be death. And when we advocate the freedom of the masses, we are by no means suggesting the abolition of any of the natural influences that individuals or groups of individuals exert on them. What we want is the abolition of influences which are artificial, privileged, legal, official" [quoted by Malatesta, in Anarchy, p. 50]

In other words, those influences which stem from hierarchical authority.

A.2.2 Why do anarchists emphasise liberty?

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An anarchist can be regarded, in Bakunin's words, as a "fanatic lover of liberty, considering it as the unique condition under which intelligence, dignity and human happiness can develop and grow. . . ." [The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State]. Because human beings are thinking creatures, to deny them liberty is to deny them the opportunity to think for themselves, which is to deny their very existence as humans. For anarchists, freedom is a product of our humanity, because:

"The very fact . . . that a person has a consciousness of self, of being different from others, creates a desire to act freely. The craving for liberty and self-expression is a very fundamental and dominant trait." [Emma Goldman, Red Emma Speaks, p. 393]

For this reason, anarchism "proposes to rescue the self-respect and independence of the individual from all restraint and invasion by authority. Only in freedom can man [sic] grow to his full stature. Only in freedom will he learn to think and move, and give the very best of himself. Only in freedom will he realise the true force of the social bonds which tie men together, and which are the true foundations of a normal social life." [Ibid., p. 59]

Thus, for anarchists, freedom is basically individuals pursuing their own good in their own way. Doing so calls forth the activity and power of individuals as they make decisions for and about themselves and their lives. Only liberty can ensure individual development and diversity. This is because when individuals govern themselves and make their own decisions they have to exercise their minds and this can have no other effect than expanding and stimulating the individuals involved.

So, liberty is the precondition for the maximum development of one's individual potential, which is also a social product and can be achieved only in and through community. A healthy, free community will produce free individuals, who in turn will shape the community and enrich the social relationships between the people of whom it is composed. Liberties, being socially produced, "do not exist because they have been legally set down on a piece of paper, but only when they have become the ingrained habit of a people, and when any attempt to impair them will meet with the violent resistance of the populace . . . One respects respect from others when one knows how to defend one's dignity as a human being. This is not only true in private life; it has always been the same in political life as well." [Rudolf Rocker, Anarcho-syndicalism, p. 64]

In short, liberty develops only within society, not in opposition to it. Thus Murray Bookchin writes:

"What freedom, independence, and autonomy people have in a given historical period is the product of long social traditions and . . . a collective development -- which is not to deny that individuals play an important role in that development, indeed are ultimately obliged to do so if they wish to be free." [Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism]

But freedom requires the right kind of social environment in which to grow and develop. Such an environment must be decentralised and based on the direct management of work by those who do it. For centralisation means coercive authority (hierarchy), whereas self-management is the essence of freedom. Self-management ensures that the individuals involved use (and so develop) all their abilities -- particularly their mental ones. Hierarchy, in contrast, substitutes the activities and thoughts of a few for the full, hierarchy marginalises the many and ensures that their development is blunted.

It is for this reason that anarchists oppose both capitalism and statism. Capitalism, like the state, is based on centralised authority, the very of which is to keep the management of work out of the hands of those who do it. This means "that the serious, final, complete liberation of the workers is possible only upon one condition: that of the appropriation of capital, that is, of raw material and all the tools of labour, including land, by the whole body of the workers." [Michael Bakunin, Bakunin on Anarchism, p. 255]

Hence, as Noam Chomsky argues, a "consistent anarchist must oppose private ownership of the means of production and the wage slavery which is a component of this system, as incompatible with the principle that labour must be freely undertaken and under the control of the producer." [Notes on Anarchism]

So, to summarise, Terrorism has been used by anarchists. It has also been used by many other political, social and religious groups and parties. For example, Christians, Marxists, Hindus, Nationalists, Republicans, Mohammedans, Sikhs, Marxists, Fascists, Jews and Patriots have all committed acts of terrorism. Few of these movements or ideas have been labelled as "terrorist by nature" - which shows anarchism's threat to the status quo. There is nothing more likely to discredit and marginalise an idea than for malicious and/or ill-informed persons to portray those who believe and practice it as "mad bombers" with no opinions or ideals at all, just an insane urge to destroy.

Of course, the vast majority of Christians and so on have opposed terrorism as morally repugnant and counter-productive. As have the vast majority of anarchists, at all times and places. However, it seems that in our case it is necessary to state our opposition to terrorism time and time again.

So, to summarise - only a small minority of terrorists have ever been anarchists, and only a small minority of anarchists have ever been terrorists. The anarchist movement as a whole has always recognised that social relationships cannot be assassinated or bombed out of existence.

A.2.19 What ethical views do anarchists hold?

Anarchist viewpoints on ethics vary considerably, although all share a common belief in the need for an individual to develop within themselves their own sense of ethics. All anarchists agree with Max Stirner that an individual must free themselves from the confines of existing morality and question that morality - "I decide whether it is the right thing for me; there is no right outside me." [The Ego and Its Own, p. 189]

Few anarchists, however, would go so far as Stirner and reject any concept of social ethics at all (saying that, Stirner does value some universal concepts although they are egoistic ones). Such extreme moral relativism is almost as bad as moral absolutism for most anarchists (moral relativism is the view that there is no right or wrong beyond what suits an individual while moral absolutism is that view that what is right and wrong is independent of what individuals think).

It is often claimed that modern society is breaking up because of excessive "egoism" or moral relativism. This is false. As far as moral relativism goes, this is a step forward from the moral absolutism urged upon society by various Moralists and true-believers because it bases itself, however slimly, upon the idea of individual reason. However, as it denies the existence (or desirability) of ethics it is but the mirror image of what it is rebelling against. Neither option empowers the individual or is liberating.

Consequently, both of these attitudes hold enormous attraction to authoritarians, as a populace that is either unable to form an opinion about things (and will tolerate anything) or who blindly follow the commands of the ruling elite are of great value to those in power. Both are rejected by most anarchists in favour of an evolutionary approach to ethics based upon human reason to develop the ethical concepts and interpersonal empathy to generalise these concepts into ethical attitudes within society as well as within individuals. An anarchistic approach to ethics therefore shares the critical individual investigation implied in moral relativism but grounds itself into common feelings of right and wrong. As Proudhon argued:

"All progress begins by abolishing something: every reform rests upon denunciation of some abuse; each new idea is based upon the proved insufficiency of the old idea."

Most anarchists take the viewpoint that ethical standards, like life itself, are in a constant process of evolution. This leads them to reject the various notions of "God's Law," "Natural Law," and so on in favour of theory of ethical development based upon the idea that individuals are entirely empowered to question and assess the world around them - in fact, they require it in order to be truly free. You cannot be an anarchist and blindly accept anything! Mikhail Bakunin, one of the founding anarchist thinkers, expressed this radical scepticism as so:

"No theory, no ready-made system, no book that has ever been written will save the world. I cleave to no system. I am a true seeker."

25

The same comments are applicable, for example, to the very successful experiments in workers' self-management during the Spanish Revolution, To quote Rousseau:

"when I see multitudes of entirely naked savages scorn European voluptuousness and endure hunger, fire, the sword, and death to preserve only their independence, I feel that it does not behove slaves to reason about freedom" [quoted by Noam Chomsky, *Red and Black Revolution*, issue 2].

A.2.18 Do anarchists support terrorism?

No, and this is for two reasons. Terrorism means either targeting or not worrying about killing innocent people. For anarchy to exist, it must be created by ordinary people. One does not convince people of one's ideas by blowing them up. Secondly, anarchism is about self-liberation. One cannot blow up a social relationship. Freedom cannot be created by the actions of an elite few destroying rulers on behalf of the majority. For so long as people feel the need for rulers, hierarchy will exist (see section A.2.16 for more on this). As we have stressed earlier, freedom cannot be given, only taken.

Moreover anarchists are not against individuals but the institutions and social relationships that cause certain individuals to have power over others and abuse (i.e. use) that power. Therefore the anarchist revolution is about destroying structures, not people. As Bakunin pointed out, *"we do not want the death of men but the abolition of positions and things"* [The Lullers].

How is it, then, that anarchism is associated with violence? Partly this is because the state and media insist on referring to terrorists who are not anarchists as anarchists. For example, the German Bader-Meinhoff gang were often called "anarchists" despite their self-proclaimed Marxist-Leninism. Smears, unfortunately, work. But the main reason for the association of terrorism with anarchism is because of the "propaganda by deed" period in the anarchist movement.

This period — roughly from 1880 to 1890 — was marked by a small number of individual anarchists assassinating members of the ruling class (royalty, politicians and so forth). This was done for two reasons: firstly, in revenge for the 20,000-plus deaths due to the French state's brutal suppression of the Paris Commune, in which many anarchists were killed (propaganda by the deed began and was most frequent in France); and secondly, as a means to encourage people to revolt by showing that their oppressors could be defeated.

It must be noted that the majority of anarchists did not support this tactic, which in any case was a failure, as it gave the state an excuse to clamp down on both the anarchist and labour movements as well as giving the media a chance to associate anarchism with mindless violence, thus alienating much of the population from the movement.

In addition, the assumption behind propaganda by the deed, i.e. that everyone was waiting for a chance to rebel, was false. In fact, people are products of the system in which they live; hence they accepted most of the myths used to keep that system going. With the failure of propaganda by deed, anarchists turned back to what most of the movement had been doing anyway: encouraging the class struggle and the process of self-liberation. This turn back to the roots of anarchism can be seen from the rise in anarcho-syndicalist unions after 1890 (see section A.5.3).

Despite most anarchists' tactical disagreement with propaganda by deed, few would consider it to be terrorism or rule out assassination under all circumstances. Bombing a village because there might be an enemy in it is terrorism, whereas taking out a murdering dictator is defence at best and revenge at worst. As anarchists have long pointed out, if by terrorism it is meant *"killing innocent people"*, then the state is the greatest terrorist of them all. If the people committing *"acts of terror"* are really anarchists, they would do everything possible to avoid harming innocent people and never use the statist line that *"collateral damage"* is regrettable but inevitable.

Thus, liberty for anarchists means a non-authoritarian society in which individuals and groups practice self-management, i.e. they govern themselves. The implications of this are important. First, it implies that an anarchist society will be non-coercive, that is, one in which violence or the threat of violence will not be used to "convince" individuals to do anything. Second, it implies that anarchists are firm supporters of individual sovereignty, and that, because of this support, they also oppose institutions based on coercive authority, i.e. hierarchy. And finally, it implies that anarchists' opposition to "government" means only that they oppose centralised, hierarchical, bureaucratic organisations or government. They do not oppose self-government through confederations of decentralised, grassroots organisations, so long as these are based on direct democracy rather than the delegation of power to "representatives." For authority is the opposite of liberty, and hence any form of organisation based on the delegation of power is a threat to the liberty and dignity of the people subjected to that power.

Anarchists consider freedom to be the only social environment within which human dignity and diversity can flower. Under capitalism and statism, however, there is no freedom for the majority, as private property and hierarchy ensure that the inclination and judgement of most individuals will be subordinated to the will of a master, severely restricting their liberty and making impossible the *"full development of all the material, intellectual and moral powers that are latent in each person"* (Bakunin, *Op. Cit.*) (see section B for further discussion of the hierarchical and authoritarian nature of capitalism and statism).

A.2.3 Are anarchists in favour of organisation?

Yes. Without association, a truly human life is impossible. Liberty cannot exist without society and organisation. As George Barrett, in *Objections to Anarchism*, points out:

"[t]o get the full meaning out of life we must co-operate, and to co-operate we must make agreements with our fellow-men. But to suppose that such agreements mean a limitation of freedom is surely an absurdity; on the contrary, they are the exercise of our freedom."

"If we are going to invent a dogma that to make agreements is to damage freedom, then at once freedom becomes tyrannical, for it forbids men to take the most ordinary everyday pleasures. For example, I cannot go for a walk with my friend because it is against the principle of Liberty that I should agree to be at a certain place at a certain time to meet him. I cannot in the least extend my own power beyond myself, because to do so I must co-operate with someone else, and co-operation implies an agreement, and that is against Liberty. It will be seen at once that this argument is absurd. I do not limit my liberty, but simply exercise it, when I agree with my friend to go for a walk."

As far as organisation goes, anarchists think that *"far from creating authority, [it] is the only cure for it and the only means whereby each of us will get used to taking an active and conscious part in collective work, and cease being passive instruments in the hands of leaders"* [Errico Malatesta, *Life and Ideas*, p. 86].

The fact that anarchists are in favour of organisation may seem strange at first, but this is because we live in a society in which virtually all forms of organisation are authoritarian, making them appear to be the only kind possible. What is usually not recognised is that this mode of organisation is historically conditioned, arising within a specific kind of society — one whose motive principles are domination and exploitation. According to archaeologists and anthropologists, this kind of society has only existed for about 5,000 years, having appeared with the first primitive states based on conquest and slavery, in which the labour of slaves created a surplus which supported a ruling class.

Prior to that time, for hundreds of thousands of years, human and proto-human societies were what Murray Bookchin calls *"organic,"* that is, based on co-operative forms of economic activity involving mutual aid, free access to productive resources, and a sharing of the products of communal labour according to need. Although such societies probably had status rankings based on age, there were no hierarchies in the sense of institutionalised dominance-subordination relations enforced by coercive sanctions and resulting in class-stratification involving the economic exploitation of one class by another [see Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom*].

It must be emphasised, however, that anarchists do not advocate going "back to the Stone Age." We merely note that since the hierarchical-authoritarian mode of organisation is a relatively recent development in the course of human social evolution, there is no reason to suppose that it is somehow "fated" to be permanent. We do not think that human beings are genetically "programmed" for authoritarian, competitive, and aggressive behaviour, as there is no credible evidence to support this claim. On the contrary, such behaviour is socially conditioned, or learned, and as such, can be unlearned (see Ashley Montagu, *The Nature of Human Aggression*). We are not fatalists or genetic determinists, but believe in free will, which means that people can change the way they do things, including the way they organise society.

And there is no doubt that society needs to be better organised, because presently most of its wealth -- which is produced by the majority -- and power gets distributed to a small, elite minority at the top of the social pyramid, causing deprivation and suffering for the rest, particularly for those at the bottom. Yet because this elite controls the means of coercion through its control of the state (see section B.2.3), it is able to suppress the majority and ignore its suffering -- a phenomenon that occurs on a smaller scale within all hierarchies. Little wonder, then, that people within authoritarian and centralised structures come to hate them as a denial of their freedom. As Alexander Berkman puts it:

"capitalist society is so badly organised that its various members suffer: just as when you have a pain in some part of you, your whole body aches and you are ill... not a single member of the organisation or union may with impunity be discriminated against, suppressed or ignored. To do so would be the same as to ignore an aching tooth: you would be sick all over" (Alexander Berkman, ABC of Anarchism, p. 53).

Yet this is precisely what happens in capitalist society, with the result that it is, indeed, "sick all over."

For these reasons, anarchists reject authoritarian forms of organisation and instead support associations based on free agreement. Free agreement is important because, in Berkman's words, "*only when each is a free and independent unit, co-operating with others from his own choice because of mutual interests, can the world work successfully and become powerful*" (Op. Cit., p. 53). In the "political" sphere, this means direct democracy and confederation, which are the expression and environment of liberty. Direct (or participatory) democracy is essential because liberty and equality imply the need for forums within which people can discuss and debate as equals and which allow for the free exercise of what Murray Bookchin calls "*the creative role of dissent*."

Anarchist ideas on libertarian organisation and the need for direct democracy and confederation will be discussed further in sections A.2.9 and A.2.10.

A.2.4 Are anarchists in favour of "absolute" liberty?

No. Anarchists do not believe that everyone should be able to "*do whatever they like*," because some actions invariably involve the denial of the liberty of others.

For example, anarchists do not support the "freedom" to rape, to exploit, or to coerce others. Neither do we tolerate authority. On the contrary, since authority is a threat to liberty, equality, and solidarity (not to mention human dignity), anarchists recognise the need to resist and overthrow it.

The exercise of authority is not freedom. No one has a "right" to rule others. As Malatesta points out, anarchism supports "*freedom for everybody... with the only limit of the equal freedom for others; which does not mean... that we recognise, and wish to respect, the freedom to exploit, to oppress, to command, which is oppression and certainly not freedom*." (Enrico Malatesta, *Life and Ideas*, p. 53).

In a capitalist society, resistance to all forms of hierarchical authority is the mark of a free person -- be it private (the boss) or public (the state). As Henry David Thoreau pointed out in his essay on "Civil Disobedience" (1849)

"Disobedience is the true foundation of liberty. The obedient must be slaves."

A.2.17 Aren't most people too stupid for a free society to work?

We are sorry to have to include this question in an anarchist FAQ, but we know that many political ideologies explicitly assume that ordinary people are too stupid to be able to manage their own lives and run society. All aspects of the capitalist political agenda, from Left to Right, contain people who make this claim. Be it Leninists, Fabians or Objectivists, it is assumed that only a select few are creative and intelligent and that these people should govern others. Usually, this elitism is masked by fine, flowing rhetoric about "freedom," "democracy" and other platitudes with which the ideologues attempt to dull people's critical thought by telling them what they want to hear.

It is, of course, also no surprise that those who believe in "natural" elites always class themselves at the top. We have yet to discover an "objectivist", for example, who considers themselves part of the great mass of "second-handers" or who will be a toilet cleaner in the unknown "ideal" of "real" capitalism. Everybody reading an elitist text will consider him or herself to be part of the "select few." It's "natural" in an elitist society to consider elites to be natural and yourself a potential member of one!

Examination of history shows that there is a basic elitist ideology which has been the essential rationalisation of all states and ruling classes since their emergence at the beginning of the Bronze Age. This ideology merely changes its outer garments, not its basic inner content.

During the Dark Ages, for example, it was coloured by Christianity, being adapted to the needs of the Church hierarchy. The most useful "divinely revealed" dogma to the priestly elite was "original sin": the notion that human beings are basically depraved and incompetent creatures who need "direction from above," with priests as the conveniently necessary mediators between ordinary humans and "God." The idea that average people are basically stupid and thus incapable of governing themselves is a carry-over from this doctrine, a relic of the Dark Ages.

In reply to all those who claim that most people are "second-handers" or cannot develop anything more than "trade union consciousness," all we can say is that it is an absurdity that cannot withstand even a superficial look at history, particularly the labour movement. The creative powers of those struggling for freedom is often truly amazing, and if this intellectual power and inspiration is not seen in "normal" society, this is the clearest indictment possible of the deadening effects of hierarchy and the conformity produced by authority. (See also section B.1 for more on the effects of hierarchy). As Bob Black points out:

"You are what you do. If you do boring, stupid, monotonous work, chances are you'll end up boring, stupid, and monotonous. Work is a much better explanation for the creeping criminalisation all around us than even such significant moronising mechanisms as television and education. People who are regimented all their lives, handed to work from school and bracketed by the family in the beginning and the nursing home in the end, are habituated to hierarchy and psychologically enslaved. Their aptitude for autonomy is so atrophied that their fear of freedom is among their few rationally grounded phobias. Their obedience training at work carries over into the families they start, thus reproducing the system in more ways than one, and into politics, culture and everything else. Once you drain the vitality from people at work, they'll likely submit to hierarchy and expertise in everything. They're used to it" (The Abolition of Work).

When elitists try to conceive of liberation, they can only think of it being given to the oppressed by kind (for Leninists) or stupid (for Objectivists) elites. It is hardly surprising, then, that it fails. Only self-liberation can produce a free society. The crushing and distorting effects of authority can only be overcome by self-activity. The few examples of such self-liberation prove that most people, once considered incapable of freedom, are more than up for the task.

Those who proclaim their "superiority" often do so out of fear that their authority and power will be destroyed once people free themselves from the debilitating hands of authority and come to realise that, in the words of Max Stirner, "*the great are great only because we are on our knees*."

As Emma Goldman remarks about women's equality, "*[i]f the extraordinary achievements of women in every walk of life have silenced forever the loose talk of women's inferiority. Those who still cling to this fetish do so because they have nothing so much as to see their authority challenged. This is the characteristic of all authority, whether the master over his economic slaves or man over women. However everywhere woman is escaping her cage, everywhere she is going ahead with free, large strides.*"

The arrogance of this claim is truly amazing. History hasn't stopped. One thousand years from now, society will be completely different from what it is presently or from what anyone has imagined. No government in place at the moment will still be around, and the current economic system will not exist. The only thing that may remain the same is that people will still be claiming that their new society is the "One True System" that completely conforms to human nature, even though all past systems did not.

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Of course, it does not cross the minds of supporters of capitalism that people from different cultures may draw different conclusions from the same facts -- conclusions that may be more valid. Nor does it occur to capitalist ideologists that the theories of the "objective" scientists may be framed in the context of the dominant ideas of the society they live in. It comes as no surprise to anarchists, however, that scientists working in Tsarist Russia developed a theory of evolution based on cooperation within species, quite unlike their counterparts in capitalist Britain, who developed a theory based on competitive struggle within and between species. That the latter theory reflected the dominant political and economic theories of British society (notably competitive individualism) is pure coincidence, of course. Kropotkin's Mutual Aid was written in response to the obvious inaccuracies that British Social Darwinism projected onto nature and human life.

A.2.16 Does anarchism require "perfect" people to work?

No. Anarchy is not a utopia, a "perfect" society. It will be a human society, with all the problems, hopes, and fears associated with human beings. Anarchists do not think that human beings need to be "perfect" for anarchy to work. They only need to be free.

Obviously, though, we think that a free society will produce people who are more in tune with both their own and others' individuality and needs, thus reducing individual conflict. Remaining disputes would be solved by reasonable methods, for example, the use of juries, mutual third parties, or community and workplace assemblies.

Like the "anarchism-is-against-human-nature" argument (see section A.2.15), opponents of anarchism usually assume "perfect" people -- people who are not corrupted by power when placed in positions of authority, people who are strangely unaffected by the distorting effects of hierarchy, privilege, and so forth. However, anarchists make no such claims about human perfection. We recognise that vesting power in the hands of one person or an elite is never a good idea, as people are not perfect and need to be accountable to others.

It should be noted that the idea that anarchism requires a "new" man or woman is often raised by the right-wing "anarcho"-capitalists to discredit real anarchism and justify the retention of hierarchical authority, specifically in capitalist relations of production. However, a moment's reflection will show that their "objection" discredits their own claim to be anarchists for they explicitly assume an anarchist society without anarchists! Needless to say, an "anarchy" made up of people who still needed authority and statism would soon become authoritarian and statist (i.e. non-anarchist) again.

This is because even if the government were overthrown tomorrow, the same system would soon grow up again, because "the strength of the government rests not with itself, but with the people. A great tyrant may be a fool and not a superman. His strength lies not in himself, but in the superstition of the people who think that it is right to obey him. So long as that superstition exists it is useless for some liberator to cut off the head of tyranny; the people will create another, for they have grown accustomed to rely on something outside themselves." (George Barret, *Objections to Anarchism*).

In other words, anarchy needs anarchists in order to be created and survive. But these anarchists need not be perfect, just people who have freed themselves, by their own efforts, of the superstition that command-and-obedience relations are necessary. The implicit assumption in the idea of a "new" anarchist person is that freedom will be given, not taken; hence the obvious conclusion follows that an anarchy requiring "perfect" people will fail. But this argument ignores the need for self-activity and self-liberation in order to create a free society.

Anarchists do not conclude that "perfect" people are necessary, because the anarchist is "no liberator with a divine mission to free humanity, but he is a part of that humanity struggling onwards towards liberty."

"If, then, by some external means an Anarchist Revolution could be, so to speak, supplied ready-made and thrust upon the people, it is true that they would reject it and rebuild the old society. If, on the other hand, the people develop their ideas of freedom, and they themselves get rid of the last stronghold of tyranny -- the government -- then indeed the revolution will be permanently accomplished!" (Ibid.)

A.2.5 Why are anarchists in favour of equality?

As mentioned in above, anarchists are dedicated to social equality because it is the only context in which individual liberty can flourish. However, there has been much nonsense written about "equality," and much of what is commonly believed about it is very strange indeed. Before discussing what anarchists do mean by equality, we have to indicate what we do not mean by it.

Anarchists do not believe in "equality of endowment," which is not only non-existent but would be very undesirable if it could be brought about. Everyone is unique. Biologically determined human differences not only exist but are "a cause for joy, not fear or regret." Why? Because "life among clones would not be worth living, and a sane person will only rejoice that others have abilities that they do not share" [Noam Chomsky *Red and Black Revolution*, No. 2].

That some people seriously suggest that anarchists means by "equality" that everyone should be identical is a sad reflection on the state of present-day intellectual culture and the corruption of words -- a corruption used to divert attention from an unjust and authoritarian system and side-track people into discussions of biology.

Nor are anarchists in favour of so-called "equality of outcome." We have no desire to live in a society where everyone gets the same goods, lives in the same kind of house, wears the same uniform, etc. Part of the reason for the anarchist revolt against capitalism and statism is that they standardise so much of life [see George Reitzer's *The McDonaldisation of Society* on why capitalism is driven towards standardisation and conformity].

"Equality of outcome" can only be introduced and maintained by force, which would not be equality anyway, as some would have more power than others! "Equality of outcome" is particularly hated by anarchists, as we recognise that every individual has different needs, abilities, desires and interests. To make all consume the same would be tyranny. Obviously, if one person needs medical treatment and another does not, they do not receive an "equal" amount of medical care. The same is true of other human needs.

For anarchists, these "concepts" of "equality" are meaningless. Equality, in anarchist theory, does not mean denying individual diversity or uniqueness. As Bakunin observes:

"once equality has triumphed and is well established, will there be no longer any difference in the talents and degree of application of the various individuals? There will be a difference, not so many as exist today, perhaps, but there will always be differences. Of that there can be no doubt. This is a proverbial truth which will probably never cease to be true -- that no tree ever brings forth two leaves that are exactly identical. How much more will this be true of men, men being much more complicated creatures than leaves. But such diversity, far from constituting an affliction is... one of the assets of mankind. Thanks to it, the human race is a collective whole wherein each human being complements the rest and has need of them; so that this infinite variation in human beings is the very cause and chief basis of their solidarity -- an important argument in favour of equality" [Integral Education]

Equality for anarchists means social equality, or, to use Murray Bookchin's term, the "equality of unequals." By this he means that hierarchical social relationships are abolished in favour of ones that encourage participation and are based on the principle of "one person, one vote." Therefore, social equality in the workplace, for example, means that everyone has an equal say in the policy decisions on how the workplace develops and changes. Anarchists are strong believers in the maxim "that which touches all, is decided by all."

This does not mean, of course, that expertise will be ignored or that everyone will decide everything. As far as expertise goes, different people have different interests, talents, and abilities, so obviously they will want to study different things and do different kinds of work. It is also obvious that when people are ill they consult a doctor -- an expert -- who manages his or her own work rather than being directed by a committee. We are sorry to have to bring these points up, but once the topics of social equality and workers' self-management come up, some people start to talk nonsense. It is common sense that a hospital managed in a socially equal way will not involve non-medical staff voting on how doctors should perform an operation!

In fact, social equality and individual liberty are inseparable. Without the collective self-management of decisions that affect a group (equality) to complement the individual self-management of decisions that affect the individual (liberty), a free society is impossible. For without both, some will have power over others, making decisions for them (i.e. governing them), and thus some will be more free than others.

Section F.3 ("Why do 'anarcho-capitalists' generally place little or no value on 'equality,' and what do they mean by that term?") discusses anarchist ideas on equality further.

A.2.6 Why is solidarity important to anarchists?

Solidarity, or mutual aid, is a key idea of anarchism. It is the link between the individual and society, the means by which individuals can work together to meet their common interests in an environment that supports and nurtures both liberty and equality. For anarchists, mutual aid is a fundamental feature of human life, a source of both strength and happiness and a fundamental requirement for a fully human existence.

Erich Fromm, noted psychologist and socialist humanist, points out that the "human desire to experience union with others is rooted in the specific conditions of existence that characterise the human species and is one of the strongest motivations of human behaviour" (To Be or To Have, p.107).

Therefore anarchists consider the desire to form "unions" (to use Max Stirner's term) with other people to be a natural need. These unions, or associations, must be based on equality and individuality in order to be fully satisfying to those who join them -- i.e. they must be organised in an anarchist manner, i.e. voluntary, decentralised, and non-hierarchical.

Solidarity -- Cupertino between individuals -- is necessary for life and is far from a denial of liberty. "What wonderful results this unique force of man's individuality has achieved when strengthened by Cupertino with other individualities." Emma Goldman observes. "Cooperation -- as opposed to intestine strife and struggle -- has worked for the survival and evolution of the species. . . . [O]nly mutual aid and voluntary Cupertino. . . can create the basis for a free individual and associational life." [Red Emma Speaks, p. 95].

Solidarity means associating together as equals in order to satisfy our common interests and needs. Forms of association not based on solidarity (i.e. those based on inequality) will crush the individuality of those subjected to them. As Rei Marut points out, liberty needs solidarity, the recognition of common interests:

"The most noble, pure and true love of mankind is the love of oneself. I want to be free! I hope to be happy! I want to appreciate all the beauties of the world. But my freedom is secured only when all other people around me are free. I can only be happy when all other people around me are happy. I can only be joyful when all the people I see and meet look at the world with joy-filled eyes. And only then can I eat my fill with pure enjoyment when I have the secure knowledge that other people, too, can eat their fill as I do. And for that reason it is a question of my own contentment, only of my own self, when I rebel against every danger which threatens my freedom and my happiness. . ." [Rei Marut (a.k.a. B. Taven). The Brickburner magazine quoted by Karl S. Guthke, B. Taven: The life behind the legends, pp. 133-4].

A.2.15 What about "human nature"?

Anarchists, far from ignoring "human nature," have the only political theory that gives this concept deep thought and reflection. Too often, "human nature" is flung up as the last line of defence in an argument against anarchism, because it is thought to be beyond reply. This is not the case, however.

First of all, human nature is a complex thing. If, by human nature, it is meant "what humans do," it is obvious that human nature is contradictory -- love and hate, compassion and heartlessness, peace and violence, and so on, have all been expressed by people and so are all products of "human nature." Of course, what is considered "human nature" can change with changing social circumstances. For example, slavery was considered part of "human nature" and "normal" for thousands of years, and war only became part of "human nature" once states developed. Therefore, environment plays an important part in defining what "human nature" is.

This does not mean that human beings are infinitely plastic, with each individual born a *tabula rasa* (blank slate) waiting to be formed by "society" (which in practice means those who run it). We do not wish to enter the debate about what human characteristics are and are not "innate." All we will say is that human beings have an innate ability to think and learn -- that much is obvious, we feel -- and that humans are sociable creatures, needing the company of others to feel complete and to prosper.

These two features, we think, suggest the viability of an anarchist society. The innate ability to think for oneself automatically makes all forms of hierarchy illegitimate, and our need for social relationships implies that we can organise without the state. The deep unhappiness and alienation afflicting modern society reveals that the centralisation and authoritarianism of capitalism and the state is denying some innate needs within us.

In fact, as mentioned earlier, for the great majority of its existence the human race has lived in anarchic communities, with little or no hierarchy. That modern society calls such people "savages" or "primitive" is pure arrogance. So who can tell whether anarchism is against "human nature"? Anarchists have accumulated much evidence to suggest that it may not be.

As for the charge the anarchists demand too much of "human nature," it is often non-anarchists who make the greatest claims on it. For "while our opponents seem to admit there is a kind of salt of the earth -- the rulers, the employers, the leaders -- who, happily enough, prevent those bad men -- the ruled, the exploited, the led -- from becoming much worse than they are. . . . there is [a] difference, and a very important one. We admit the imperfections of human nature, but we make no exception for the rulers. They make it, although sometimes unconsciously" [Peter Kropotkin, Act for Yourself, p. 83]. If human nature is so bad, then giving some people power over others and hoping this will lead to justice and freedom is hopelessly utopian.

Today, however, with the rise of "sociobiology," some claim (with very little real evidence) that capitalism is a product of our "nature," which is determined by our genes. These claims have been leapt upon by the powers that be. Considering the dearth of evidence, their support for this "new" doctrine must be purely the result of its utility to those in power -- i.e. the fact that it is useful to have an "objective" and "scientific" basis to rationalise that power. Like the social Darwinism that preceded it, sociobiology proceeds by first projecting the dominant ideas of current society onto nature (often unconsciously, so that scientists mistakenly consider the ideas in question as both "normal" and "natural"). Then the theories of nature produced in this manner are transferred back onto society and history, being used to "prove" that the principles of capitalism (hierarchy, authority, competition, etc.) are eternal laws, which are then appealed to as a justification for the status quo! Amazingly, there are many supposedly intelligent people who take this sleight-of-hand seriously.

This sort of apologetics is natural, of course, because every ruling class has always claimed that their right to rule was based on "human nature," and hence supported doctrines that defined the later in ways appearing to justify elite power -- be it sociobiology, divine right, original sin, etc. Obviously, such doctrines have always been wrong . . . until now, of course, as it is obvious our current society truly conforms to "human nature" and it has been scientifically proven by our current scientific priesthood!

A.2.14 Why is voluntarism not enough?

Voluntarism means that association should be voluntary in order to maximise liberty. Anarchists are, obviously, voluntarists, thinking that only in free association, created by free agreement, can individuals develop, grow, and express their liberty. However, it is evident that under capitalism voluntarism is not enough in itself to maximise liberty. Voluntarism implies promising (i.e. the freedom to make contracts), and promising implies that individuals are capable of independent judgement and rational deliberation. In addition, it presupposes that they can evaluate and change their actions and relationships. Contracts under capitalism, however, contradict these implications of voluntarism. For, while technically "voluntary" (though as we show in section B.4, this is not really the case), capitalist contracts result in a denial of liberty. This is because the social relationship of wage-labour involves promising to obey in return for payment. However, as Carole Pateman points out in *The Problem of Political Obligation*, "to promise to obey is to state, that in certain areas, the person making the promise is no longer free to exercise her capacities and decide upon her own actions, and is no longer equal, but subordinate" [page 19].

In effect, under capitalism you are only free to the extent that you can choose whom you will obey! Freedom, however, must mean more than the right to change masters. Voluntary servitude is still servitude. To paraphrase Rousseau:

Under capitalism the worker regards herself as free; but she is grossly mistaken; she is free only when she signs her contract with her boss. As soon as it is signed, slavery overtakes her and she is nothing but an order taker.

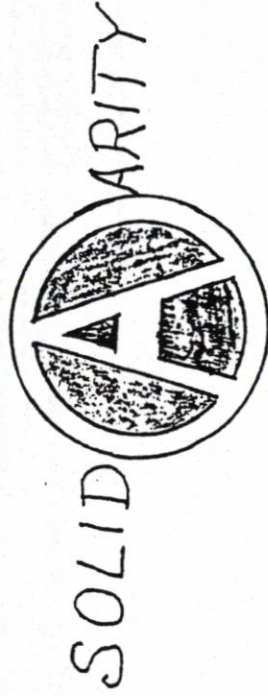
Therefore anarchists stress the need for direct democracy in voluntary associations in order to ensure that the concept of "freedom" is not a sham and a justification for domination, as it is under capitalism.

Any social relationships based on abstract individualism are likely to be based upon force, power, and authority, not liberty. This of course assumes a definition of liberty according to which individuals exercise their capacities and decide their own actions. Therefore, voluntarism is not enough to create a society that maximises liberty.

Of course, it could be objected that anarchists value some forms of social relationships above others and that a true libertarian must allow people the freedom to select their own social relationships. To answer the second objection first, in a society based on private property (and so statism), those with property have more power, which they can use to perpetuate their authority. And why should we excuse servitude or tolerate those who desire to restrict the liberty of others? The "liberty" to command is the liberty to enslave, and so is actually a denial of liberty.

Regarding the first objection, anarchists plead guilty. We are prejudiced against the reduction of human beings to the status of robots. We are prejudiced in favour of human dignity and freedom. We are prejudiced, in fact, in favour of humanity and individuality.

Section A.2.11 discusses why direct democracy is the necessary social counterpart to voluntarism (i.e. free agreement). Section B.4 discusses why capitalism cannot be based on equal bargaining power between property owners and the propertyless.



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To practice solidarity means that we recognise, as in the slogan of Industrial Workers of the World, "an injury to one is an injury to all." Solidarity, therefore, is the means to protect individuality and liberty and so is an expression of self-interest. As Alfie Kohn points out:

"when we think about co-operation... we tend to associate the concept with fuzzy-minded idealism... This may result from confusing co-operation with altruism... Structural co-operation defies the usual egoism/altruism dichotomy. It sets things up so that by helping you I am helping myself at the same time. Even if my motive initially may have been selfish, our fates now are linked. We sink or swim together. Co-operation is a shrewd and highly successful strategy - a pragmatic choice that gets things done at work and at school even more effectively than competition does... There is also good evidence that co-operation is more conducive to psychological health and to liking one another." [No Contest: The Case Against Competition, p. 7]

And, within a hierarchical society, solidarity is important not only because of the satisfaction it gives us but also because it is necessary to resist those in power. By standing together, we can increase our strength and get what we want. Eventually, by organising into groups, we can start to manage our own collective affairs together and so replace the boss once and for all. "Unions will... multiply the individual's mean and secure his assailed property" [Max Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, p. 258]. By acting in solidarity we can replace the current system with one more to our liking. There is power in "union."

Solidarity is thus the means by which we can obtain and ensure our own freedom. We agree to work together so that we will not have to work for another. By agreeing to share with each other we increase our options so that we may enjoy more, not less. Mutual aid is in my self-interest - that is, I see that it to my advantage to reach agreements with others based on mutual respect and social equality, for if I dominate someone, this means that the conditions exist which allow domination, and so in all probability too will be dominated in turn.

As Max Stirner saw, solidarity is the means by which we ensure that our liberty is strengthened and defended from those in power who want to rule us: "Do you yourself count for nothing then?" he asks. "Are you bound to let anyone do anything he wants to you? Defend yourself and no one will touch you millions of people are behind you, supporting you, then you are a formidable force and you will win without difficulty." [quoted in Luigi Galleani's *The End of Anarchism?*, p. 79 - different translation in *The Ego and Its Own*, p. 197]

Solidarity, therefore, is important to anarchists because it is the means by which liberty can be created and defended against power. Solidarity is strength and a product of our nature as social beings. However, solidarity should not be confused with "herdism," which implies passively following a leader. In order to be effective, solidarity must be created by free people, co-operating together as equals. The "big WE" is not solidarity, although the desire for "herdism" is a product of our need for solidarity and union. It is "solidarity" corrupted by hierarchical society, in which people are conditioned to blindly obey leaders.

A.2.7 Why do anarchists argue for self-liberation?

Liberty, by its very nature, cannot be given. An individual cannot be freed by another, but must break or her own chains through their own effort. Of course, self-effort can also be part of collective action, and in many cases it has to be in order to attain its ends. As Emma Goldman points out:

"history tells us that every oppressed class [or group or individual] gained true liberation from its masters by its own efforts" [Red Emma Speaks, p. 142].

Anarchists have long argued that people can only free themselves by their own actions. The various methods anarchists suggest to aid this process will be discussed in section J ("What Do Anarchists Do?" and will not be discussed here. However, these methods all involve people organising themselves, setting their own agendas, and acting in ways that empower them and eliminate their dependence on leaders to things for them. Anarchism is based on people "acting for themselves" (performing what anarchists call "direct action").

Direct action has an empowering and liberating effect on those involved in it. Self-activity is the means by which the creativity, initiative, imagination and critical thought of those subjected to authority can be developed. It is the means by which society can be changed. As Enrico Malatesta points out "[b]etween man and his social environment there is a reciprocal action. Men make society what it is and society makes men what they are, and the result is therefore a kind of vicious circle... Fortunately existing society has not been created by the inspired will of a dominating class, which has succeeded in reducing all its subjects to passive and unconscious instruments... It is the result of a thousand intermingled struggles, of a thousand human and natural factors..." [Life and Ideas, p. 188]

Society, while shaping all individuals, is also created by them, through their actions, thoughts, and ideals. Challenging institutions that limit one's freedom is mentally liberating, as it sets in motion the process of questioning authoritarian relationships in general. This process gives us insight into how society works, changing our ideas and creating new ideals. To quote Emma Goldman again: "True emancipation begins... in woman's soul." And in a man's too, we might add. It is only here that we can "begin [our] inner regeneration, [cutting] loose from the weight of prejudices, traditions and customs" [Op. Cit., page 142]. But this process must be self-directed, for as Max Stirner notes, "The man who is self-free is nothing but a freed man... a dog dragging a piece of chain with him" [Max Stirner, The Ego and Its Own, p. 168].

In an interview during the Spanish Revolution, the Spanish anarchist militant Durutti said, "we have a new world in our hearts." Only self-activity and self-liberation allows us to create such a vision in our hearts and gives us the confidence to try to actualise it in the real world.

Anarchists, however, do not think that self-liberation must wait for the future, after the "glorious revolution." The personal is political, and given the nature of society, how we act in the here and now will influence the future of our society and our lives. Therefore, even in pre-anarchist society anarchists try to create, as Bakunin puts it, "not only the ideas but also the facts of the future itself." We can do so by creating alternative social relationships and organisations, acting as free people in a non-free society. Only by our actions in the here and now can we lay the foundation for a free society.

Revolution is a process, not an event, and every "spontaneous revolutionary action" is usually results from and is based upon the patient work of many years of organisation and education by people with "utopian" ideas. The process of "creating the new world in the shell of the old" (to use another IWW expression), by building alternative institutions and relationships, is but one component of what must be a long tradition of revolutionary commitment and militancy.

As Malatesta made clear, "to encourage popular organisations of all kinds is the logical consequence of our basic ideas, and should therefore be an integral part of our programme... anarchists do not want to emancipate the people; we want the people to emancipate themselves... we want the new way of life to emerge from the body of the people and correspond to the state of their development and advance as they advance" [Op. Cit., p. 90].

MAY 1



The Real Labor Day

While groups cannot think, individuals cannot live or discuss by themselves. Groups and associations are an essential aspect of individual life. Indeed, as groups generate social relationships by their very nature, they help shape individuals. In other words, groups structured in an authoritarian way will have a negative impact on the freedom and individuality of those within them. However, due to the abstract nature of their "individualism," capitalist individualists fail to see any difference between groups structured in a libertarian manner rather than in an authoritarian one — they are both "groups." Because of their one-sided perspective on this issue, "individualists" ironically end up supporting some of the most "collectivist" institutions in existence — capitalist companies — and, moreover, always find a need for the state despite their frequent denunciations of it. These contradictions stem from capitalist individualism's dependence on individual contracts in an unequal society, i.e. abstract individualism.

In contrast, anarchists stress social "individualism" (another, perhaps better, term for this concept could be "communal individuality"). Anarchism "puts at the centre of gravity in society is the individual — that the [sic] must think for himself, act freely, and live fully... If he is to develop freely and fully, he must be relieved from the interference and oppression of others... [T]his has nothing in common with... 'rugged individualism.' Such predatory individualism is really flabby, not rugged. At the least danger to its safety, it runs to cover of the state and waits for protection... Their 'rugged individualism' is simply one of the many pretences the ruling class makes to mask unbridled business and political extortion." [Emma Goldman, *Ibid.*, p. 397]

Anarchism rejects the abstract individualism of capitalism, with its ideas of "absolute" freedom of the individual which is constrained by others. This theory ignores the social context in which freedom exists and grows.

A society based on "individual contracts" usually results in an inequality of power between the contracting individuals and so entails the need for an authority based on laws above them and organised coercion to enforce the contracts between them. This consequence is evident from capitalism and, most notably, in the "social contract" theory of how the state developed. In this theory it is assumed that individuals are "free" when they are isolated from each other, as they allegedly were originally in the "state of nature." Once they join society, they supposedly create a "contract" and a state to administer it. However, besides being a fantasy with no basis in reality (human beings have always been social animals), this "theory" is actually a justification for the state's having extensive powers over society; and this in turn is a justification of the capitalist system, which requires a strong state. It also mimics the results of the capitalist economic relations upon which this theory is built. Within capitalism, individuals "freely" contract together, but in practice the owner rules the worker for as long as the contract is in place. (See sections A.2, D.4 and D.4 for further details).

In practice, both individualism and collectivism lead to a denial of both individual liberty and group autonomy and dynamics. In addition, each implies the other, with collectivism leading to a particular form of individualism and individualism leading to a particular form of collectivism.

Collectivism, with its implicit suppression of the individual, ultimately impoverishes the community, as groups are only "given" life by the individuals who comprise them. Individualism, with its explicit suppression of community (i.e. the people with whom you live), ultimately impoverishes the individual, since individuals do not exist apart from society but can only exist within it. In addition, individualism ends up denying the "select few" the insights and abilities of the individuals who make up the rest of society, and so is a source of self-denial. This is individualism's fatal flaw (and contradiction), namely "the impossibility for the individual to attain a really full development in the conditions of oppression," namely "the mass by the 'beautiful aristocracies'." His [or her] development would remain uni-lateral" [Peter Kropotkin, *Revolutionary Pamphlets*, p. 293].

True liberty and community exist elsewhere.

A.2.13 Are anarchists individualists or collectivists?

The short answer is: neither. This can be seen from the fact that liberal scholars denounce anarchists like Bakunin for being "collectivists" while Marxists attack Bakunin and anarchists in general for being "individualists."

This is hardly surprising, as anarchists reject both ideologies as nonsense. Whether they like it or not, non-anarchist individualists and collectivists are two sides of the same capitalist coin. This can best shown be by considering modern capitalism, in which "individualist" and "collectivist" tendencies continually interact, often with the political and economic structure swinging from one pole to the other. Capitalist collectivism and individualism are both one-sided aspects of human existence, and like all manifestations of imbalance, deeply flawed.

For anarchists, the idea that individuals should sacrifice themselves for the "group" or "greater good" is nonsensical. Groups are made up of individuals, and if people think only of what's best for the group, the group will be a lifeless shell. It is only the dynamics of human interaction within groups which give them life. "Groups" cannot think, only individuals can. This fact, ironically, leads authoritarian "collectivists" to a most particular kind of "individualism," namely the "cult of the personality" and leader worship. This is to be expected, since such collectivism lumps individuals into abstract groups, denies their individuality, and ends up with the need for someone with enough individuality to make decisions -- a problem that is "solved" by the leader principle. Stalinism and Nazism are excellent examples of this phenomenon.

Therefore, anarchists recognise that individuals are the basic unit of society and that only individuals have interests and feelings. This means they oppose "collectivism" and the glorification of the group. In anarchist theory the group exists only to aid and develop the individuals involved in them. This is way we place so much stress on groups structured in a libertarian manner -- only a libertarian organisation allows the individuals within a group to fully express themselves, manage their own interests directly and to create social relationships which encourage individuality and individual freedom. So while society and the groups they join shapes the individual, the individual is the true basis of society. Hence Malatesta:

"Much has been said about the respective roles of individual initiative and social action in the life and progress of human societies. ... [E]verything is maintained and kept going in the human world thanks to individual initiative. ... The real being is man, the individual. Society or the collectivity - and the State or government which claims to represent it - if it is not a hollow abstraction, must be made up of individuals. And it is in the organism of every individual that all thoughts and human actions inevitably have their origin, and from being individual they become collective thoughts and acts when they are or become accepted by many individuals. Social action, therefore, is neither the negation nor the complement of individual initiatives, but is the resultant of initiatives, thoughts and actions of all individuals who make up society. ... [T]he question is not really changing the relationship between society and the individual. ... [I]t is a question of preventing some individuals from oppressing others; of giving all individuals the same rights and the same means of action; and of replacing the initiative to the few [which Malatesta defines as a key aspect of government/hierarchy], which inevitably results in the oppression of everyone else ..."
[Anarchy, pp. 36-37]

These considerations do not mean that "individualism" finds favour with anarchists. As Emma Goldman pointed out, "rugged individualism" ... is only a masked attempt to repress and defeat the individual and his individuality. ... [It] has inevitably resulted in the crassest class distinctions. ... [and] has meant all the "individualism" for the masters, while the people are regimented into a slave caste to serve a handful of self-seeking "supermen" [Red Emma Speaks, p. 89].

A.2.8 Is it possible to be an anarchist without opposing hierarchy?

No. We have seen that anarchists abhor authoritarianism. But if one is an anti-authoritarian, one must oppose all hierarchical institutions, since they embody the principle of authority. The argument for this (if anybody needs one) is as follows:

A hierarchy is a pyramidally-structured organisation composed of a series of grades, ranks, or offices of increasing power, prestige, and (usually) remuneration. Scholars who have investigated the hierarchical form have found that the two primary principles it embodies are domination and exploitation. For example, in his article "What Do Bosses Do?" (Review of Radical Political Economics, 6, 7), a study of the modern factory, Steven Marglin found that the main function of the corporate hierarchy is not greater productive efficiency (as capitalists claim), but greater control over workers, the purpose of such control being more effective exploitation.

Control in a hierarchy is maintained by coercion, that is, by the threat of negative sanctions of one kind or another: physical, economic, psychological, social, etc. Such control, including the repression of dissent and rebellion, therefore necessitates centralisation: a set of power relations in which the greatest control is exercised by the few at the top (particularly the head of the organisation), while those in the middle ranks have much less control and the many at the bottom have virtually none.

Since domination, coercion, and centralisation are essential features of authoritarianism, and as those features are embodied in hierarchies, all hierarchical institutions are authoritarian. Moreover, for anarchists, any organisation marked by hierarchy, centralism and authoritarianism is state-like, or "statist." And as anarchists oppose both the state and authoritarian relations, anyone who does not seek to dismantle all forms of hierarchy cannot be called an anarchist.

Some argue that as long as an association is voluntary, whether it has an hierarchical structure is irrelevant. Anarchists disagree. If we take the key element as being whether an association is voluntary or not we would have to argue that the current statist system must be considered as "anarchy" - no one forces an individual to live in a specific state. We are free to leave and go somewhere else. By ignoring the hierarchical nature of an association, you can end up supporting organisations based upon the denial of freedom (including capitalist companies, the armed forces, states even) all because they are "voluntary." Anarchy is more than being free to pick a master.

Therefore opposition to hierarchy is a key anarchist position, otherwise you just become a "voluntary anarchist" - which is hardly anarchistic. For more on this see section A.2.14 (Why is voluntarism not enough?).

Anarchists argue that organisations do not need to be hierarchical, they can be based upon co-operation between equals who manage their own affairs directly. In this way we can do without without hierarchical structures (i.e. the delegation of power in the hands of a few). Only when an association is self-managed by its members can it be considered truly anarchistic.

We are sorry to belabour this point, but some capitalist apologists, apparently wanting to appropriate the "anarchist" name because of its association with freedom, have recently claimed that one can be both a capitalist and an anarchist at the same time (as in so-called "anarcho" capitalism). It should now be clear that since capitalism is based on hierarchy (not to mention statism and exploitation), "anarcho" capitalism is a contradiction in terms. (For more on this, see Section E)

Anarchists desire a decentralised society, based on free association. We consider this form of society the best one for maximising the values we have outlined above – liberty, equality and solidarity. Only by a national decentralisation of power, both structurally and territorially, can individual liberty be fostered and encouraged. The delegation of power into the hands of a minority is an obvious denial of individual liberty and dignity. Rather than taking the management of their own affairs away from people and putting it in the hands of others, anarchists favour organisations which minimise authority, keeping power at the base, in the hands of those who are affected by any decisions reached.

Free association is the cornerstone of an anarchist society. Individuals must be free to join together as they see fit, for this is the basis of freedom and human dignity. However, any such free agreement must be based on decentralisation of power; otherwise it will be a sham (as in capitalism), as only equality provides the necessary social context for freedom to grow and development. Therefore anarchists support directly democratic collectives, based on "one person one vote" (for the rationale of direct democracy as the political counterpart of free agreement, see section A.2.11 - Why do most anarchists support direct democracy?).

We should point out here that an anarchist society does not imply some sort of idyllic state of harmony within which everyone agrees. Far from it! As Luigi Galleani points out, "*[d]isagreements and friction will always exist. In fact they are an essential condition of unlimited progress. But once the bloody area of sheer animal competition - the struggle for food - has been eliminated, problems of disagreement could be solved without the slightest threat to the social order and individual liberty.*" [The End of Anarchism?, p. 28]

Therefore, an anarchist society will be based upon co-operative conflict as "*[c]onflict, per se, is not harmful... disagreements exist (and should not be hidden)... What makes disagreement destructive is not the fact of conflict itself but the addition of competition.*" [Alfie Kohn, No Contest: The Case Against Competition, p. 156] Indeed, "*a rigid demand for agreement means that people will effectively be prevented from contributing their wisdom to a group effort.*" [Ibid.] It is for this reason that most anarchists reject consensus decision making in large groups (see section A.2.12).

So, in an anarchist society associations would be run by mass assemblies of all involved, based upon extensive discussion, debate and co-operative conflict between equals, with purely administrative tasks being handled by elected committees. These committees would be made up of mandated, recallable and temporary delegates who carry out their tasks under the watchful eyes of the assembly which elected them. If the delegates act against their mandate or try to extend their influence or work beyond that already decided by the assembly (i.e. if they start to make policy decisions), they can be instantly recalled and their decisions abolished. In this way, the organisation remains in the hands of the union of individuals who created it.

This power of recall is an essential tenet of any anarchist organisation. The key difference between a statist or hierarchical system and an anarchist community is who wields power. In a parliamentary system people give power to a group of representatives to make decisions for them for a fixed period of time. Whether they carry out their promises is irrelevant as people cannot recall them till the next election. Power lies at the top and those at the base are expected to obey. In an anarchist society this relationship is reversed. No one individual or group (elected or unelected) holds power in an anarchist community. Instead decisions are made using direct democratic principles and, when required, the community can elect or appoint delegates to carry out these decisions. There is a clear distinction between policy making (which lies with everyone who is affected) and the co-ordination and administration of any adopted policy (which is the job for delegates).

These egalitarian communities, founded by free agreement, also freely associate together in confederations. Such a free confederation would be run from the bottom up, with decisions following from the elemental assemblies upwards. The confederations would be run in the same manner as the collectives. There would be regular local regional, "national" and international conferences in which all important issues and problems affecting the collectives involved would be discussed. In addition, the fundamental, guiding principles and ideas of society would be debated and policy decisions made, put into practice, reviewed, and co-ordinated.

"[I]n order... to create full consensus on a decision, minority dissenters were often subtly urged or psychologically coerced to decline to vote on a troubling issue, inasmuch as their dissent would essentially amount to a one-person veto. This practice, called 'standing aside' in American consensus processes, all too often involved intimidation of the dissenters, to the point that they completely withdrew from the decision-making process, rather than make an honourable and continuing expression of their dissent by voting, even as a minority, in accordance with their views. Having withdrawn, they ceased to be political beings--so that a 'decision' could be made... '[C]onsensus' was ultimately achieved only after dissenting members nullified themselves as participants in the process."

"On a more theoretical level, consensus silenced that most vital aspect of all dialogue, dissent. The ongoing dissent, the passionate dialogue that still persists even after a minority accedes temporarily to a majority decision... [can be] replaced... by dull monologues -- and the uncontested and deadening tone of consensus. In majority decision-making, the defeated minority can resolve to overturn a decision on which they have been defeated -- they are free to openly and persistently articulate reasoned and potentially persuasive disagreements. Consensus, for its part, honours no minorities, but mutes them in favour of the metaphysical 'one' of the consensus 'group' [Communitarianism: The Democratic Dimension of Anarchism, Democracy and Nature, no. 8, p.8].

Bookchin does not "deny that consensus may be an appropriate form of decision-making in small groups of people who are thoroughly familiar with one another." But he notes that, in practical terms, his own experience has shown him that "when larger groups try to make decisions by consensus, it usually obliges them to arrive at the lowest common intellectual denominator in their decision-making: the least controversial or even the most mediocre decision that a stable assembly of people can attain is adopted--precisely because everyone must agree with it or else withdraw from voting on that issue" (Op. Cit., p.71)

Therefore, due to its potentially authoritarian nature, most anarchists disagree that consensus is the political aspect of free association. While it is advantageous to try to reach consensus, it is usually impractical to do so -- especially in large groups -- regardless of its other, negative effects. Often it demeans a free society or association by tending to subvert individuality in the name of community and dissent in the name of solidarity. Neither true community nor solidarity are fostered when the individual's development and self-expression are aborted by public disapproval and pressure. Since individuals are all unique, they will have unique viewpoints which they should be encouraged to express, as society evolves and is enriched by the actions and ideas of individuals.

In other words, anarchist supporters of direct democracy stress the "creative role of dissent" which, they fear, "tends to fade away in the gray uniformity required by consensus." (Op. Cit., p. 81)

We must stress that anarchists are not in favour of a mechanical decision making process in which the majority just vote the minority away and ignore them. Far from it! Anarchists who support direct democracy see it as a dynamic debating process in which majority and minority listen to and respect each other as far possible and create a decision which all can live with (if possible). They see the process of participation within directly democratic associations as the means of creating common interests, as a process which will encourage diversity, individual and minority expression and reduce any tendency for majorities to marginalise or oppress minorities by ensuring discussion and debate occurs on important issues.



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"Certainly anarchists recognise that where life is lived in common it is often necessary for the minority to come to accept the opinion of the majority. When there is an obvious need or usefulness in doing something and, to do it requires the agreement of all, the few should feel the need to adapt to the wishes of the many... But such adaptation on the one hand by one group must be on the other be reciprocal, voluntary and must stem from an awareness of need and of goodwill to prevent the running of social affairs from being paralysed by obstinacy. It cannot be imposed as a principle and statutory norm..." [Op. Cit., p. 100]

As the minority has the right to secede from the association as well as having extensive rights of action, protest and appeal, majority rule is not imposed as a principle. Rather, it is purely a decision making tool which allows minority dissent and opinion to be expressed (and acted upon) while ensuring that no minority forces its will on the majority. In other words, majority decisions are not binding on the minority. After all, as Malatesta argued:

"one cannot expect, or even wish, that someone who is firmly convinced that the course taken by the majority leads to disaster, should sacrifice his [or her] own convictions and passively look on, or even worse, should support a policy he [or she] considers wrong." [Life and Ideas, p. 132]

Even the Individual Anarchist Lyander Spooner acknowledged that direct democracy has its uses when he noted that "[a]ll, or nearly all, voluntary associations give a majority, or some other portion of the members less than the whole, the right to use some limited discretion as to the means to be used to accomplish the ends in view." However, only the unanimous decision of a jury (which would "judge the law, and the justice of the law") could determine individual rights as this "tribunal fairly represent[s] the whole people" as "no law can rightfully be enforced by the association in its corporate capacity, against the goods, rights, or person of any individual, except it be such as all members of the association agree that it may enforce" (his support of juries results from Spooner acknowledging that it "would be impossible in practice" for all members of an association to agree) [Trial by Jury, p. 130-1f, p. 134, p. 214, p. 152 and p. 132]

Thus direct democracy and individual/minority rights need not clash. In practice, we can imagine direct democracy would be used to make most decisions within most associations (perhaps with super-majorities required for fundamental decisions) plus some combination of a jury system and minority protest/direct action and evaluate/protect minority claims/rights in an anarchist society. The actual forms of freedom can only be created through practical experience by the people directly involved.

Lastly, we must stress that anarchist support for direct democracy does not mean that this solution is to be favoured in all circumstances. For example, many small associations may favour consensus decision making (see the next section on consensus and why most anarchists do not think that it is a viable alternative to direct democracy). However, most anarchists think that direct democracy within free association is the best (and most realistic) form of organisation which is consistent with anarchist principles of individual freedom, dignity and equality.

A.2.12 Is consensus an alternative to direct democracy?

The few anarchists who reject direct democracy within free associations generally support consensus in decision making. Consensus is based upon everyone on a group agreeing to a decision before it can be put into action. Thus, it is argued, consensus stops the majority ruling the minority and is more consistent with anarchist principles.

Consensus, although the "best" option in decision making, as all agree, has its problems. As Murray Bookchin points out in describing his experience of consensus, it can have authoritarian implications, because

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Action committees would be formed, if required, to co-ordinate and administer the decisions of the assemblies and their congresses, under strict control from below as discussed above. Delegates to such bodies would have a limited tenure and have a fixed mandate - they are not able to make decisions on behalf of the people they are delegates for.

Most importantly, the basic community assemblies can overturn any decisions reached by the conferences and withdraw from any confederation. Any compromises that are made by a delegate during negotiations have to go back to a general assembly for ratification. Without that ratification any compromises that are made by a delegate are not binding on the community that has delegated a particular task to a particular individual or committee. In addition, they can call confederal conferences to discuss new developments and to inform action committees about changing wishes and to instruct them on what to do about any developments and ideas.

By organising in this manner, hierarchy is abolished, because the people at the base of the organisation are in control, not their delegates. Only this form of organisation can replace government (the initiative and empowerment of the few) with anarchy (the initiative and empowerment of all). This form of organisation would exist in all activities which required group work and the co-ordination of many people. It would be, as Bakunin said, the means "to integrate individuals into structures which they could understand and control." For individual initiatives, the individual involved would manage them.

As can be seen, anarchists wish to create a society based upon structures that ensure that no individual or group is able to wield power over others. Free agreement, confederation and the power of recall, fixed mandates and limited tenure are mechanisms by which power is removed from the hands of governments and placed in the hands of those directly affected by the decisions. For a fuller discussion on what an anarchist society would look like see section 1.

A.2.10 What will abolishing hierarchy mean and achieve?

The creation of a new society based upon libertarian organisations will have an incalculable effect on everyday life. The empowerment of millions of people will transform society in ways we can only guess at now. However, many consider these forms of organisation as impractical and doomed to failure.

To those who say that such confederal, non-authoritarian organisations would produce confusion and disunity, anarchists maintain that the statist, centralised and hierarchical form of organisation produces indifference instead of involvement, heartlessness instead of solidarity, uniformity instead of unity, and privileged elites instead of equality. More importantly, such organisations destroy individual initiative and crush independent action and critical thinking. (For more on hierarchy, see section B.1 - "Why are anarchists against authority and hierarchy?" - and related sections).

That libertarian organisation can work and is based upon (and promotes) liberty was demonstrated in the Spanish Anarchist movement. Fenner Brockway, Secretary of the British Independent Labour Party, when visiting Barcelona during the 1936 revolution, noted that "the great solidarity that existed among the Anarchists was due to each individual relying on his [sic] own strength and not depending upon leadership... The organisations must, to be successful, be combined with free-thinking people; not a mass, but free individuals" [quoted by Rudolf Rocker, Anarcho-syndicalism, p. 58]

As sufficiently indicated already, hierarchical, centralised structures restrict freedom. As Proudhon noted: "the centralist system is all very well as regards size, simplicity and construction: it lacks but one thing -- the individual no longer belongs to himself in such a system, he cannot feel his worth, his life, and no account is taken of him at all" [quoted in Paths in Utopia, Martin Buber, p. 33].

The effects of hierarchy can be seen all around us. It does not work. Hierarchy and authority exist everywhere, in the workplace, at home, in the street. As Bob Black puts it, "if you spend most of your waking life taking orders or kissing ass, if you get habituated to hierarchy, you will become passive-aggressive, sado-masochistic, servile and stupefied, and you will carry that load into every aspect of the balance of your life." [The Libertarian as Conservative]

This means that the end of hierarchy will mean a massive transformation in everyday life. It will involve the creation of individual-centred organisations within which all can exercise, and so develop, their abilities to the fullest. By involving themselves and participating in the decisions that affect them, their workplace, their community and society, they can ensure the full development of their individual capacities.

Only self-determination and free agreement on every level of society can develop the responsibility, initiative, intellect and solidarity of individuals and society as a whole. Only anarchist organisation allows the vast talent which exists within humanity to be accessed and used, enriching society by the very process of enriching and developing the individual. Only by involving everyone in the process of thinking, planning, co-ordinating and implementing the decisions that affect them can freedom blossom and individuality be fully developed and protected. Anarchy will release the creativity and talent of the mass of people enslaved by hierarchy.

Anarchy will even be of benefit for those who are said to benefit from capitalism and its authority relations. Anarchists "maintain that both rulers and ruled are spoiled by authority; both exploiters and exploited are spoiled by exploitation" [Peter Kropotkin, *Act for Yourself*, p. 83]. This is because "[i]n any hierarchical relationship the dominator as well as the submissive pays his dues. The price paid for the glory of command is indeed heavy. Every tyrant resents his duties. He is relegated to drag the dead weight of the dormant creative potential of the submissive all along the road of his hierarchical excursion" [The Right to Be Greedy, For Ourselves].

A.2.11 Why are most anarchists in favour of direct democracy?

For most anarchists, direct democratic voting on policy decisions within free associations is the political counterpart of free agreement. The reason is that "many forms of domination can be carried out in a 'free, non-coercive, contractual manner... and it is naive... to think that mere opposition to political control will in itself lead to an end of oppression." [John P. Clark, *Max Stirner's Egoism*, p. 93]

It is obvious that individuals must work together in order to lead a fully human life. And so, "[h]aving to join with others humans... [the individual has three options] he [or she] must submit to the will of others (be enslaved) or subject others to his will (be in authority) or live with others in fraternal agreement in the interests of the greatest good of all (be an associate). Nobody can escape from this necessity." [Errico Malatesta, *The Anarchist Revolution*, p. 85]

Anarchists obviously pick the last option, association, as the only means by which individuals can work together as free and equal human beings, respecting the uniqueness and liberty of one another. Only within direct democracy can individuals express themselves, practice critical thought and self-government, so developing their intellectual and ethical capacities to the full. In terms of increasing an individual's freedom and their intellectual, ethical and social faculties, it is far better to be sometimes in a minority than be subject to the will of a boss all the time. So what is the theory behind anarchist direct democracy?

Once an individual joins a community or workplace, he or she becomes a "citizen" (for want of a better word) of that association. The association is organised around an assembly of all its members (in the case of large workplaces and towns, this may be a functional sub-group such as a specific office or neighbourhood). In this assembly, in concert with others, the content of his or her political obligations are defined. In acting within the association, people must exercise critical judgement and choice, i.e. manage their own activity. This means that political obligation is not owed to a separate entity above the group or society, such as the state or company, but to one's fellow "citizens."

Although the assembled people collectively legislate the rules governing their association, and are bound by them as individuals, they are also superior to them in the sense that these rules can always be modified or repealed. Collectively, the associated "citizens" constitute a political authority, but as this authority is based on horizontal relationships between themselves rather than vertical ones between themselves and an elite, the "authority" is non-hierarchical ("rational" or "natural," see section B.1 - "Why are anarchists against authority and hierarchy?" - for more on this). Thus Proudhon:

"In place of laws, we will put contracts [i.e. free agreement]. - No more laws voted by a majority, nor even unanimously; each citizen, each town, each industrial union, makes its own laws." [The General Idea of the Revolution, pp. 245-6]

Such a society would be based upon industrial democracy, for within the workers' associations "all positions are elective, and the by-laws subject to the approval of the members." [Op. Cit., p. 222] Instead of capitalist or statist hierarchy, self-management (i.e. direct democracy) would be the guiding principle of the freely joined associations that make up a free society.

Of course it could be argued that if you are in a minority, you are governed by others ("Democratic rule is still rule" [L. Susan Brown, *The Politics of Individualism*, p. 53]). Now, the concept of direct democracy as we have described it is not necessarily tied to the concept of majority rule. If someone finds themselves in a minority on a particular vote, he or she is confronted with the choice of either consenting or refusing to recognise it as binding. To deny the minority the opportunity to exercise its judgement and choice is to infringe its autonomy and to impose obligation upon it which it has not freely accepted. The coercive imposition of the majority will is contrary to the ideal of self-assumed obligation, and so is contrary to direct democracy and free association. Therefore, far from being a denial of freedom, direct democracy within the context of free association and self-assumed obligation is the only means by which liberty can be nurtured. Needless to say, a minority, if it remains in the association, can argue its case and try to convince the majority of the error of its ways.

And we must point out here that anarchist support for direct democracy does not suggest we think that the majority is always right. Far from it! The case for democratic participation is not that the majority is always right, but that no minority can be trusted not to prefer its own advantage to the good of the whole. History proves what common-sense predicts, namely that anyone with dictatorial powers (by they a head of state, a boss, a husband, whatever) will use their power to enrich and empower themselves at the expense of those subject to their decisions.

Anarchists recognise that majorities can and do make mistakes and that is why our theories on association place great importance on minority rights. This can be seen from our theory of self-assumed obligation, which bases itself on the right of minorities to protest against majority decisions and makes dissent a key factor in decision making. Thus Carole Pateman:

"If the majority have acted in bad faith... [then the] minority will have to take political action, including politically disobedient action if appropriate, to defend their citizenship and independence, and the political association itself... Political disobedience is merely one possible expression of the active citizenship on which a self-managing democracy is based... The social practice of promising involves the right to refuse or change commitments; similarly, the practice of self-assumed political obligation is meaningless without the practical recognition of the right of minorities to refuse or withdraw consent, or where necessary, to disobey." [The Problem of Political Obligation, p. 162]

Moving beyond relationships within associations, we must highlight how different associations work together. As would be imagined, the links between associations follow the same outlines as for the associations themselves. Instead of individuals joining an association, we have associations joining confederations. The links between associations in the confederation are of the same horizontal and voluntary nature as within associations, with the same rights of "voice and exit" for members and the same rights for minorities. In this way society becomes an association of associations, a community of communities, a commune of communes, based upon maximising individual freedom by maximising participation and self-management.

The workings of such a confederation are outlined in section A.2.9 (What sort of society do anarchists want?) and discussed in greater detail in section I (What would an anarchist society look like?).

This system of direct democracy fits nicely into anarchist theory. Malatesta speaks for all anarchists when he argued that "anarchists deny the right of the majority to govern human society in general." [Op. Cit., p. 100] As can be seen, the majority has no right to enforce itself on a minority - the minority can leave the association at any time and so, to use Malatesta's words, do not have to "submit to the decisions of the majority before they have even heard what these might be." [Op. Cit., p. 101] Hence, direct democracy within voluntary association does not create "majority rule" nor assume that the minority must submit to the majority no matter what. In effect, anarchist supporters of direct democracy argue that it fits Malatesta's argument that: